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ABSTRACT

By comparing resource expenditures of academically high achieving school districts in the Chicago (Illinois) suburbs with those of the Chicago Public Schools, this study contends that Chicago's schools are asked to perform at a high level with far fewer resources than the highest performing schools in the region. This analysis linked high school and elementary districts with overlapping boundaries to establish 14 combined districts in the city. A total of 87 suburban school districts were included. Contrary to popular perception, Chicago spent a larger percentage of its total budget on instruction and much less on administration than the highest achieving districts in the metropolitan area. Despite the different levels of resources, the city allocated its financial resources in ways that were similar to those of the highest achieving districts. What distinguished Chicago from the highest achieving districts was that the city schools had less money to educate students that are far more disadvantaged and in need of greater instructional and support services. Administrative costs were actually lower in Chicago. The city could not afford the support services available in suburban districts. Overall, it was apparent that inadequate resources hamp.. Chicago's ability to provide instructional programs. One appendix lists the highest achieving school districts in the Chicago area. (Contains 11 tables.) (SLD)

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DISPELLING MYTHS:

A Comparison of Spending for Public Education In Chicago and its Suburbs

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chicago and the Highest Achieving School Districts Allocate Resources in Similar Ways

Contrary to popular perceptions, Chicago spent a larger percentage of its total budget on instruction and less on administration than the highest achieving districts in the metropolitan area. Despite different levels of resources, Chicago allocated financial resources in ways similar to the highest achieving suburban districts. Comparative analysis by the Chicago Urban League of FY 1991 annual financial statements revealed that Chicago spent 61% of its budget on instruction compared to 54% in the highest achieving districts. What distinguished Chicago from the highest achieving districts was that the Chicago Public Schools had less money to educate students that are far more disadvantaged and in need of greater instructional and support services.

Summary of Expenditures By Functional Category	Chicago Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Average Suburban Spending Per Pupil	Percent Of Total	Spending Difference Per Student
Instruction	$3,319	61.3%	$4,087	53.9%	($767)
Student Support	$237	4.4%	$377	5.0%	($140)
Administrative	$459	8.5%	$810	10.7%	($351)
Operations	$1,158	21.4%	$1,676	22.1%	($517)
Non-Operations	$140	2.6%	$428	5.6%	($288)
Community Services	$104	1.9%	$200	2.6%	($96)
Total	$5,417	100.0%	$7,577	100.0%	($2,160)

Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois School Districts. *Annual Financial Report*
June 30, 1991

Administrative Costs are Lower in Chicago

The difference in spending patterns between Chicago and the highest achieving districts resulted from funding levels and not from excessive administrative costs in the Chicago Public Schools. In FY 1991, administrative costs were 8% of total school expenditures in Chicago, while the suburban districts spent 11%. Chicago spent $350 dollars less per student and allocated less of its total budget for administration than the suburban school districts surveyed. For every 1,000 students, Chicago had three administrators, while these high-achieving suburban districts had four. The most inefficient providers of education were

the suburban high school and elementary districts, which often provide overlapping services and have high administrative costs. Suburban students attending unit districts had similar high achievement levels to those in the high school and elementary districts sampled, but the unit districts spent $280 per student less on administration.

Chicago Cannot Afford the Support Services Available in Suburban Districts

According to the *1991 Illinois School Report Card*, over 70% of Chicago's students were from low-income families compared to only 5% in the highest achieving districts. Students in Chicago required more direct support services, but because of limited resources, students often did not receive the support services they needed to fully benefit from instructional programs. Children with special needs in the highest achieving districts received a greater level of support services than their city counterparts.

Inadequate Resources Hamper Chicago's Ability to Provide Instructional Programs

Chicago had fewer total financial resources per student for education than all of the highest achieving suburban districts. Chicago spent less on all program categories essential to the education process than the highest achieving districts. The impact on the quality of instruction from this difference in school resources was particularly evident when comparing the amount Chicago spent per student for instruction to that spent by the highest achieving school districts. The instructional program in Chicago received $770 less per student than in the average of the highest achieving school districts.

INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, the Chicago Public Schools have come under fire from critics who have argued that money was spent inefficiently and that resources could be better utilized. Since school reform began in 1989, Chicago has significantly trimmed expenditures in many categories and substantially reorganized administration. Yet, as the Chicago schools face major potential financial shortfalls for the 1993-1994 school year, resistance to supporting Chicago with adequate resources continues, implying that Chicago could provide a quality education for its students with fewer resources.

By comparing resource expenditures of academically high achieving school districts in the Chicago suburbs with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), this study contends that Chicago's schools are asked to perform at a high level with far fewer resources than the highest performing school districts in the region. The Chicago Public Schools and high-achieving suburban districts are similar in many of their resource allocation choices. However, they are clearly different in the amount of resources they have to allocate.

At the time of this analysis, school reform has been in effect for less than four years. This major effort to reform schools in Chicago was initiated with no additional resources from the State. While some schools are improving, instructional improvement in Chicago is currently threatened by the serious financial crisis facing the schools. This study indicates that misconceptions about waste and abuse in the Chicago Public Schools hinder efforts to move beyond rhetoric about central bureaucracy and constructively address the resource needs of providing a high-quality education in the city.

Examining the expenditures of the highest achieving districts provides a measure of what a quality education may cost. At a minimum, students in Chicago deserve the type of education offered to suburban students and, arguably, they deserve additional programs that meet the unique needs of a city with high poverty rates, crime, and teenage pregnancy. The magnitude of the $2.6 billion budget in Chicago tends to distort perceptions throughout the State about the amount of resources allocated per student for essential programs. Even when unrestricted and state categorical funds are merged, as they are in this analysis, suburban districts that have the highest test scores and fewer social challenges spend more money per student on community service programs, adult education, and busing than does Chicago.

Financial analyses of Illinois school districts have highlighted the enormous disparity in per pupil spending among school districts; the lowest spending districts spend less than $2,500 per student while the wealthiest spend over $10,000 per student.[1] The disparity in school revenue has resulted from an over reliance on local property taxes in Illinois. To a large extent, revenue levels of Illinois school districts are a function of the property wealth of their

[1]See EdEquity Coalition, *The Inequity in Illinois School Finance*, Chicago, July, 1991.

local communities, rather than children's educational needs. This report illustrates the extraordinary differences in educational opportunity created by varied levels of educational funding.

The analysis is based on a sampling of the highest achieving districts in the metropolitan area The financial analysis of these school districts, often referred to as "lighthouse districts," provides a measure of how well Chicago spends its money on education and to some extent indicates the educational priorities of the most affluent communities in the metropolitan area.

Comparisons between Chicago and suburban districts are complicated by the presence of three types of school districts that have varying taxing authority and are treated separately by the State aid formula. Because Chicago is a unit district, serving both elementary and secondary students, and the majority of the highest achieving districts in the metropolitan area are either high school or elementary districts, it has been difficult for analysts to directly compare Chicago and suburban resource levels and allocation. In order to create comparable units for analysis, this study linked high school and elementary districts with overlapping boundaries to establish 14 combined districts.[2] A total of 87 suburban school districts were included in the study: 67 elementary districts, 14 high school districts, and 6 unit districts that represented schools with the highest level of academic accomplishment in the Chicago area.

The League's analysis also developed an alternative perspective to the conventional reporting of financial data by including in this analysis all revenues and programs available to area school districts. This is essential in order to make a complete comparison of the full range of programs that a school system is able to provide for its children. In addition, rather than using average daily attendance, a figure that consistently understates Chicago's programmatic needs, all children enrolled at the beginning of the school year were included in the per student comparisons.

This report is divided into the following sections:

Section One provides demographic profiles of the Chicago Public Schools and the average highest achieving suburban districts.

Section Two reports spending differences by program category and object type among districts.

Section Three discusses methodology and assumptions involved in comparing districts.

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[2]To facilitate the comparison of different types of districts, the Chicago Urban League used a combining mechanism developed at Illinois State University. Appendix 1 lists all school districts in the analysis and how combined districts were created.

I. DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

Achievement Levels

The suburban districts analyzed in this study were selected because of their high achievement. The differences in achievement rates between the highest achieving school districts and the Chicago Public Schools demonstrates the enormous gap in student preparation levels in the metropolitan area.

The *1991 Illinois School Report Card* identified average graduation rates of 95% and 45% for the selected suburban schools and Chicago, respectively. None of the combined suburban districts' graduation rates were less than 90%. The aptitude scores of suburban students taking the American College Test (ACT), were significantly higher than Chicago's. Chicago students averaged a composite score of 17 while the sample suburban average was 23.

The State average composite score for the ACT was 20.8 in 1991. Among all Illinois school districts, the average ACT score ranged from 12.0 to 24.6. Chicago's average composite score was roughly four points below the statewide average, while the highest achieving districts' average was approximately two points above the composite ACT score in Illinois.

At an early age, the superior basic skills preparation for students in the highest achieving school districts was evident. Even in third grade, the difference in reading achievement was dramatic, with over 72% of the suburban students scoring above the median Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) score and 72% of Chicago students below the median. Over half of the third graders in Chicago scored in the bottom quartile in reading compared to only 10% in the highest achieving suburban districts. Similarly, 68% of third graders scored in the top quartile of math achievement in the suburban districts, and 15% of Chicago's third graders scored in the top quartile; the percentage of students in the bottom quartile in math was 5% for the suburban districts and 50% for Chicago.

Racial Composition of Students

The 20 high-achieving suburban districts in the sample enrolled a total of 215,634 students compared to 401,554 students in Chicago.[3] The racial diversity of the students in the Chicago Public Schools contrasts sharply with that of the highest achieving suburban school districts surveyed (Table 1).

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[3]Illinois State Board of Education, *1991 Illinois School Report Card*, 1992. The *1991 Illinois School Report Card* and Illinois State Board of Education. Illinois School Districts. *Annual Financial Report*, June 30, 1991 were the most recent data available for both financial and school district analysis. Ed.Dat provided the *1991 Illinois School Report Card* data used in this analysis.

Table 1

Racial Composition of Students

Race	Chicago	Average Suburban
African American	57.8%	5.1%
Latino	27.3%	4.0%
White	11.4%	82.3%
Asian American	2.9%	8.4%
Other	0.6%	0.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Illinois State Board of Education
1991 Illinois School Report Card
Ed.Dat, 1992

The suburban high-achieving school districts were more racially homogeneous than the Chicago Public Schools. However, more than 17% of the students in the suburban schools surveyed were minorities. Several school districts had significant percentages of minority students enrolled. African-American students represented 24% and 43% of the student bodies in the combined districts of Oak Park and Evanston, respectively.

Suburban Districts have Fewer Students with Special Needs

The special needs of students in Chicago far exceed those of students in the high-achieving suburban districts.

> Over 70% of Chicago's students were from low-income families; less than 5% of the suburban students were from low-income families.
>
> The Chicago Public Schools had more than three times the percentage of limited English proficient students than the suburban sample's average. In Chicago, 11% of students required bilingual instruction.
>
> The mobility rate of students within a district, which measures the percent of students who move to different schools within one year, was three times higher in Chicago than in the average high-achieving suburban district.[4]

---

[4] *1991 Illinois School Report Card*, Ed.Dat, 1992.

II. PATTERNS OF SCHOOL SPENDING

A. DISPARITIES IN RESOURCES

Of all the districts sampled, Chicago had the fewest resources per student available to educate children. In FY 1991, Chicago spent $5,417 per student. The highest spending district in the sample, Northbrook, spent over $11,000 per student. The suburban average was $7,577 per student.

School spending can be divided into programmatic categories of expenditures that represent, in a broad manner, the nature of the programs and projects districts provide. This analysis generally utilized the categories defined by the Illinois State Board of Education, but in the areas of instruction and support services, some expenditures were reclassified. These categories are defined as follows:

Instruction: The teaching of pupils, the interaction between teacher and pupil, and direct support of the teaching and learning in the classroom. This encompasses activities of aides or assistants of any type that support the instructional process.

Support Services: Services that provide technical (such as guidance and health) and logistical support to facilitate and enhance instruction of students.

Administration: Activities locally or centrally administered that involve establishing and implementing policy in connection with operating local schools or providing support services.

Operations: Activities concerned with keeping the physical plant (i.e., grounds, buildings, and equipment) in proper condition. These activities include the maintenance and safety in buildings, on the grounds, and in the vicinity of schools.

Non-Operations: All payments to other local education agencies. Activities involving the retirement of the bonded indebtedness of the local schools.

Community Services: Services provided by the district that integrate the family into the child's educational process. These include recreation programs, civic organization activities, public libraries, programs of custody and child care, welfare services, nonpublic school pupil services, and home/school services.[5]

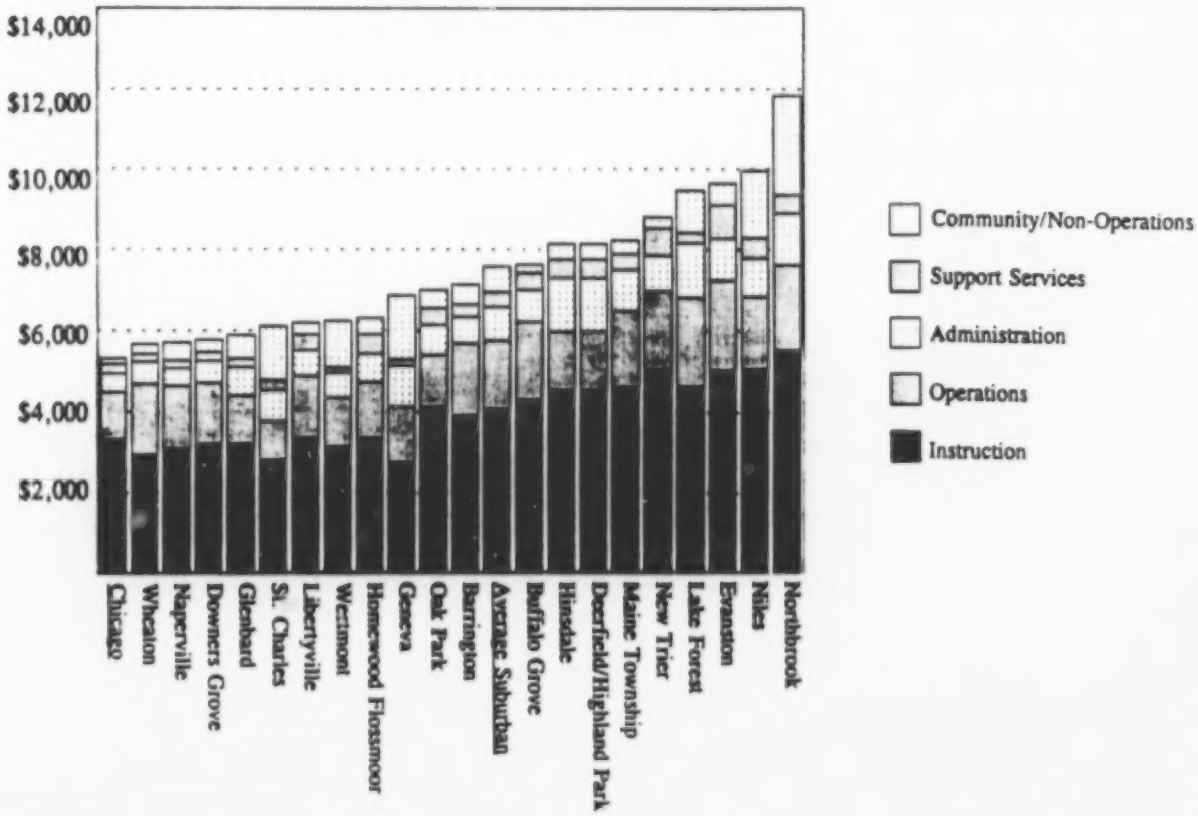
---

[5]Illinois State Board of Education, *Illinois Program Accounting Manual for Local Education Agencies*, 1990. See methodology section for a description of the reclassification of some expenditure categories.

In general, the resource distribution among districts indicated that the proportions of funds spent on major program categories were similar among all districts, with the exception being that several suburban districts spent substantially more on community services and non-operations (Table 2). Although some districts had spending levels less than $6,000 per student, those districts had far fewer special needs children than Chicago.

Table 2

Total Spending Per Student by District



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June 30, 1991

High Achievers and High Property Wealth

The enormous differences in property wealth between Chicago and the suburban school systems accounted for the large variation in per student expenditures. High-achieving districts had access to considerable amounts of equalized assessed value of property (EAV) per student. On average, the highest achieving suburban districts had in excess of $130,000

in property wealth per student with which to fund their schools. Chicago has less than half this amount of property wealth ($57,547) per student. In fact, Chicago's property wealth per student was lower than any of the suburban districts studied.

Local Support of Education

Some consider the local tax rate to be a measure of the effort a local community exerts in support of its schools. However, local property tax rates may be influenced by the financial ability of taxpayers in the district to support the tax rate. Comparing local property tax rates can be deceptive. The current property tax structure in Illinois and existing homestead exemptions disproportionately penalizes individuals on fixed incomes and low-income taxpayers and communities. Presently, renters, many of whom have low incomes, who indirectly pay property taxes through higher rents, are not eligible to benefit from homestead exemptions. This regressive property tax structure further complicates any evaluation of the level of community support for schools in terms of property tax rates.

As Table 3 shows, in FY 1991 the Chicago Public Schools' tax rate ranked 10th among all districts analyzed. The average tax rate in the suburban districts was $4.61 per $100 EAV, which was slightly higher than the City's rate.

Table 3

Education Tax Rate by School District

School District	Total Education Tax Rate
Evanston	7.06
Oak Park/River Forest	6.60
Homewood Flossmoor	6.53
Glenbard	5.39
New Trier	5.15
Maine Township	4.86
Wheaton	4.85
Libertyville	4.85
Westmont	4.74
CHICAGO	4.48
Buffalo Grove	4.45
Northbrook	4.39
Naperville	4.35
Downers Grove	4.33
St. Charles	4.29
Geneva	4.27
Deerfield	4.22
Niles	4.12
Barrington	4.06
Hinsdale	3.67
Lake Forest	2.86

Illinois State Board of Education
1991 Annual Statistical Report
Fall 1992

B. TOTAL SPENDING BY PROGRAM CATEGORY AND OBJECT TYPE

Whether analyzed by program category or object type, major deficiencies in Chicago educational programs were attributable not to internal resource allocations, but to inadequate levels of funding.

Similarities in Spending Patterns Among Program Categories

Chicago's proportional distribution of resources between spending categories was similar to that of the highest achieving districts in the metropolitan area. However, Chicago spent more of its total budget on instruction and less on administration than the highest achieving districts in the State. Chicago spent 61% of its budget on instruction compared to 54% in the highest achieving districts. Administrative costs required 8% of the total resources in Chicago, while the suburban districts spent 11%.

The level of administrative expenditures per student indicated that Chicago spent less on all program categories, including administrative expenditures, than the average of the highest achieving suburban districts (Table 4). For instance, Chicago spent roughly $770 less on instruction, $140 less on support services, $350 less on administration, $500 less on operations, $240 less on non-operations, and $100 less on community services per student than did the highest achieving suburban districts.

Table 4

Total Expenditures by Functional Category

Summary of Expenditures By Functional Category	Chicago Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Average Suburban Spending Per Pupil	Percent Of Total	Spending Difference Per Student
Instruction	$3,319	61.3%	$4,087	53.9%	($767)
Student Support	$237	4.4%	$377	5.0%	($140)
Administrative	$459	8.5%	$810	10.7%	($351)
Operations	$1,158	21.4%	$1,676	22.1%	($517)
Non-Operations	$140	2.6%	$428	5.6%	($288)
Community Services	$104	1.9%	$200	2.6%	($96)
Total	$5,417	100.0%	$7,577	100.0%	($2,160)

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While the total amount spent on each program varied substantially, the proportions of resources spent on operations, student support, non-operations, and community services were

comparable. Instruction and operation expenditures were the largest categories of costs for the majority of the districts surveyed, including Chicago. To the extent that high-achieving suburban schools are a model for educational excellence, Chicago's decisions regarding the internal allocation of resources were among the best.

Object Types

Another way of examining total expenditures in a district is to analyze spending by object type. The types used in this analysis and by the Illinois State Board of Education are defined as follows:

> Salaries: The total amount regularly paid or stipulated to be paid to an individual, before deductions, for personal services rendered while on the payroll of a district.
>
> Employee benefits: Compensation, in addition to regular salary, provided to an employee. This may include such benefits as health insurance, life insurance, annual leave, sick leave, retirement, and social security.
>
> Purchased services: Personal services rendered by personnel who are not on the payroll of the district and all related expenses covered by the district. (This includes consultants.)
>
> Supplies and Materials: Material items that are consumed, of an expendable nature, worn out, or deteriorated in use or lose their identity through fabrication or incorporation into a different or more complex unit or substance.
>
> Capital Outlay: An expenditure which results in the acquisition of assets or additions to fixed assets which are presumed to provide benefits for more than one year.
>
> Other Objects, Transfers, and Tuition: A category of goods or services purchased. Money transferred from another fund without expectation of repayment.[6]

Chicago and the highest achieving districts had similar spending patterns. Salaries constituted 64% and 61% of the total budgets for Chicago and the average suburban district analyzed, respectively. Chicago spent more on employee benefits than the highest achieving districts both in terms of total dollars per student and percent of total budget. Chicago spent almost twice as much of its total budget on employee benefits compared to the suburban districts. Suburban districts, on average, spent more of their budgets on capital outlays than did the Chicago Public Schools. Resource allocations for purchased services, supplies and materials, and other objects were comparable (Table 5).

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[6]ISBE, *Illinois Program Accounting Manual for Local Education Agencies*, 1990.

The amount per student allocated to various types of expenditures indicates that Chicago spent less on salaries, purchased services, supplies and materials, capital outlays, and other objects than the highest achieving districts. The lack of supplies in the Chicago schools has long been a major complaint of school staff. In fact, Chicago spent approximately $150 less per student on supplies and materials than the highest achieving suburban districts. In addition, annual capital investment was roughly $450 less per student in Chicago than in the suburban districts.

Table 5

Total Expenditures by Object Type

Summary of Expenditures by Object Type	Chicago Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Suburban Spending Per Pupil	Percent Of Total	Spending Difference Per Student
Salaries	$3,448	63.7%	$4,633	61.1%	($1,185)
Employee Benefits	$663	12.2%	$488	6.4%	$174
Purchased Services	$640	11.8%	$810	10.7%	($170)
Supplies and Materials	$315	5.8%	$468	6.2%	($153)
Capital Outlays	$138	2.5%	$599	7.9%	($461)
Other Objects	$81	1.5%	$354	4.7%	($273)
Transfers	$0	0.0%	$9	0.1%	($9)
Tuition	$133	2.5%	$216	2.9%	($83)
Total	$5,417	100.0%	$7,577	100.0%	($2,160)

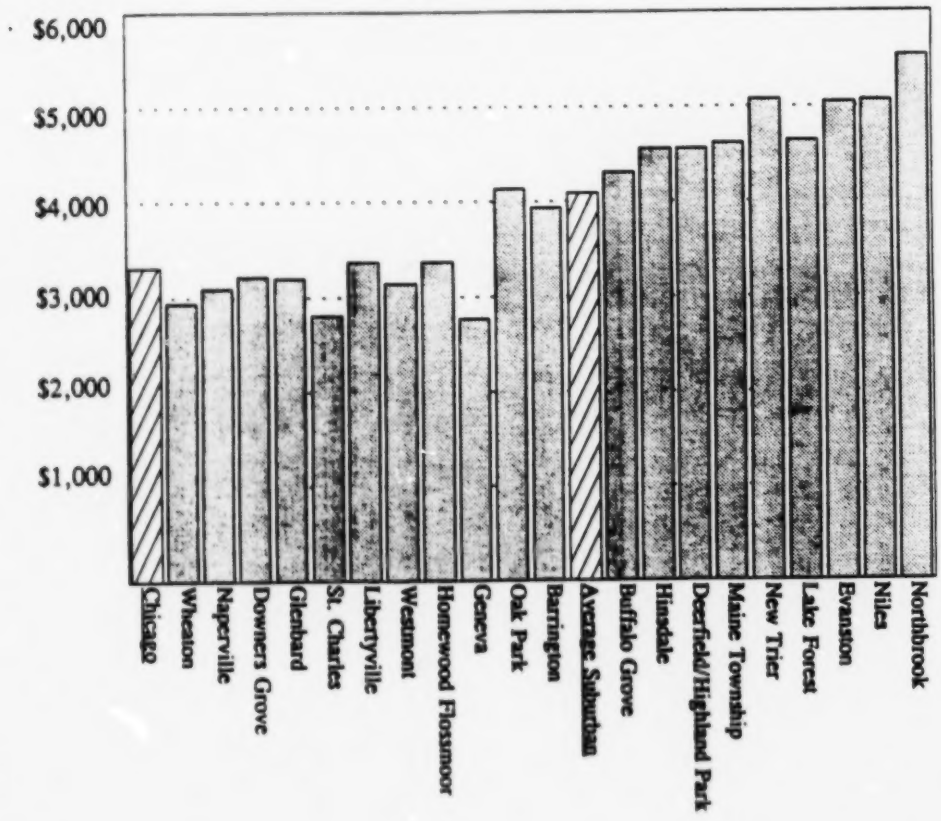
Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois School Districts. *Annual Financial Report*
June 30, 1991

C. EXPENDITURES ON INSTRUCTION

Chicago spent a greater proportion of its budget on instructional services than did all of the highest achieving suburban districts surveyed. Chicago allocated 61% of its total budget to instruction compared to the average suburban expenditure of 54%. However, in terms of total dollars per student allocated to instructional programs, Chicago spent approximately $770 less on total instruction than the average high-achieving suburban district (Table 6).

Table 6

Instructional Spending by District



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Instructional programs included a wide variety of activities ranging from the regular programs that are provided in basic classroom education to various gifted and alternative programs. As Table 7 shows, across almost all of these program types, Chicago spent less per student than the average of the suburban sample. Every classroom received $18,480 less in Chicago (average class size of 24) than in the highest achieving suburban districts.

Table 7

Expenditures by Instructional Program

Expenditures for Instruction	Chicago Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Suburban Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Spending Difference Per Student
Regular Programs	$2,011	37.1%	$2,812	37.1%	($802)
Special Education	$590	10.9%	$580	7.7%	$10
Remedial Education	$244	4.5%	$52	0.7%	$192
Adult Education	$7	0.1%	$17	0.2%	($10)
Vocational Education	$189	3.5%	$106	1.4%	$83
Interscholastic Programs	$7	0.1%	$103	1.4%	($96)
Summer School	$13	0.2%	$25	0.3%	($13)
Gifted Programs	$3	0.1%	$30	0.4%	($27)
Bilingual Education	$84	1.6%	$44	0.6%	$40
Alternative Programs	$2	0.0%	$7	0.1%	($5)
Improvement of Instruction Services	$84	1.6%	$117	1.5%	($33)
Educational Media Services	$83	1.5%	$181	2.4%	($98)
Assessment and Testing	$2	0.0%	$13	0.2%	($11)
Total Instruction	$3,319	61.3%	$4,087	53.9%	($767)
Total Expenditures	$5,417	100.0%	$7,577	100.0%	($2,160)

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Regular Instruction Programs

Regular instruction programs are instructional activities designed for students who do not require special programs.[7] A comparison of school spending patterns indicated that Chicago had $800 less to spend for regular instructional programs than the high-achieving suburban districts. To a large degree, differences in regular instruction translated into disparities in average class size and average salaries. The average class size for third grades in the high-achieving suburban districts was 22, while Chicago's average third grade class size was 25.

[7]ISBE definitions were used for all program descriptions, *Illinois Program Accounting Manual for Local Education Agencies*, 1990.

Special Education

Special education provides instruction and support programs needed by students who have a disability. State law mandates a standard level of support per special education service. These reimbursement formulas provide for a local share or deductible beyond the State's statutory formula. In 1992-93 the Illinois State Board of Education reimbursed districts for only a portion of the statutory formulas: 38% of extraordinary services, 90% of personnel reimbursements, 87% of private tuition, and 81% of transportation costs for special education.[8]

Although the State funds special education as a categorical program in addition to general state aid, the amount of reimbursement was insufficient to fully cover all of a district's expenses. Chicago's per student expenditure level was similar to other districts. However, a greater proportion of the total budget was expended on special education in Chicago than in other suburban districts.

Remedial Education

Remedial expenditures are used for supplementary programs, usually in areas of basic instruction such as mathematics and reading. Chicago spent four times the suburban average for remedial education. Chicago spent $190 more per student on remedial education than suburban districts. While current remedial educational services may not fully meet the needs of the children they are attempting to serve, the difference in remedial education requirements demonstrates the demands placed on instructional services in Chicago.

A high percentage of all children in Chicago require individualized instruction. Half of all Chicago students in the third grade tested in the bottom quartile on the IGAP test in both math and reading. Even though Chicago allocated a greater percentage of its budget to remedial education, achievement scores indicate the needs of many children are not being met.

Forty-seven percent Chicago students scored on the bottom quartile on the math section of the IGAP compared with 7% of students attending the highest achieving districts. An estimated 15,810 and 190,217 students required remedial services in the high achieving districts and Chicago, respectively.[9] Every student scoring in the bottom quartile on the IGAP in math in Chicago received $275 less in remedial services than their suburban counterparts, even though the expenditures per student on remedial services were higher in Chicago.

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[8]Illinois State Board of Education, *Proposed Budget FY 94*, 1993.

[9]The bottom quartile on math scores was used as an approximation for the number of students requiring remedial services.

Adult Education

Adult education is defined as instructional services for adults who have completed or interrupted their schooling. Even though average adult education attainment was less in Chicago than in the suburban districts, Chicago spent $10 less per student on adult education than communities that, by and large, are highly educated.[10]

Vocational Education

In FY 1991, Chicago's expenditures for vocational education were greater than those in the suburbs. Twenty-six percent of all Chicago Public School students were in vocational education compared to only 8% in the suburban districts.

Interscholastic and Summer Programs

Largely because of differences in resource levels, suburban extracurricular activities and enrichment programs designed to supplement regular instruction are more extensive than Chicago's. In FY 91, Chicago spent roughly $100 less per student on interscholastic programs, such as intramural sports, theater, computer club, and debate, than did the suburban schools. The average suburban district spent almost twice as much as Chicago on summer school programs.

Gifted Programs

Gifted education is designed to provide special learning experiences for students identified as unusually talented. The high-achieving suburban districts spent ten times more per student on gifted education than Chicago. A curriculum that emphasizes higher order thinking skills has been absent from many regular programs in the public schools. This type of programming may be even more essential for Chicago's low-income children than for suburban children, who tend to have more educational resources available to them outside of schools.

Bilingual Education

There were 45,772 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students requiring bilingual services in Chicago and 7,753 LEP students in the highest achieving districts. A total of $33.7 and $9.5 million was spent on bilingual services in Chicago and the suburban districts, respectively. Although Chicago spent a greater percentage of its budget and more per student on bilingual education, the tremendous need for bilingual services in the City has resulted in LEP students in Chicago receiving $490 less in services than their suburban LEP counterparts. While the

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[10]Chicago Urban League, Latino Institute, Northern Illinois University. *The Changing Economic Standing of Minorities in the Chicago Metropolitan Area*, 1992, p. 27.

majority of revenues for bilingual services was provided through state and federal sources in Chicago, other districts were able to supplement those resources with local revenues, thereby providing greater services for their children.

Improvement of Instructional Services

Expenditures for the improvement of instructional services are designed to assist instructional staff in developing, planning, and evaluating the teaching and learning process. These programs, critical for teachers and staff to implement effective teaching techniques and learning theories, were not funded as completely in Chicago as in the highest achieving suburban schools. Chicago had roughly $100 less per student than the suburban sample average for educational media services, which include librarians, equipment, and other technical support for student learning. Furthermore, the suburban districts had an average of $33 more per student for the improvement of instructional services than did Chicago.

Instructional Employee Compensation

In FY 1991, Chicago allocated a greater percentage of its total budget to salaries and employee benefits for instructional programs than did the highest achieving suburban districts. In instructional programs, Chicago spent 46% for salaries and 9% for benefits, compared to an average suburban cost of 43% for salaries and 4% for benefits. However, on a per student basis, the expenditures for instructional salaries and benefits were $750 per student more in the average suburban district than in Chicago.

In FY 1991, the average teacher salary was $4,228 less in Chicago than in the average high-achieving district. Teachers in Chicago had an average of one additional year of teaching experience than those the sampled districts. In addition, a smaller percentage of teachers in Chicago had Masters Degrees than teachers in the high-achieving suburban districts.

Chicago teacher salaries are closer to average salaries in suburban districts in FY 1993. Teacher salary schedules in Chicago have increased 10% since FY 1991. Salary increases in Chicago raised the total amount per student spent and instruction's proportion of the Chicago's total budget.

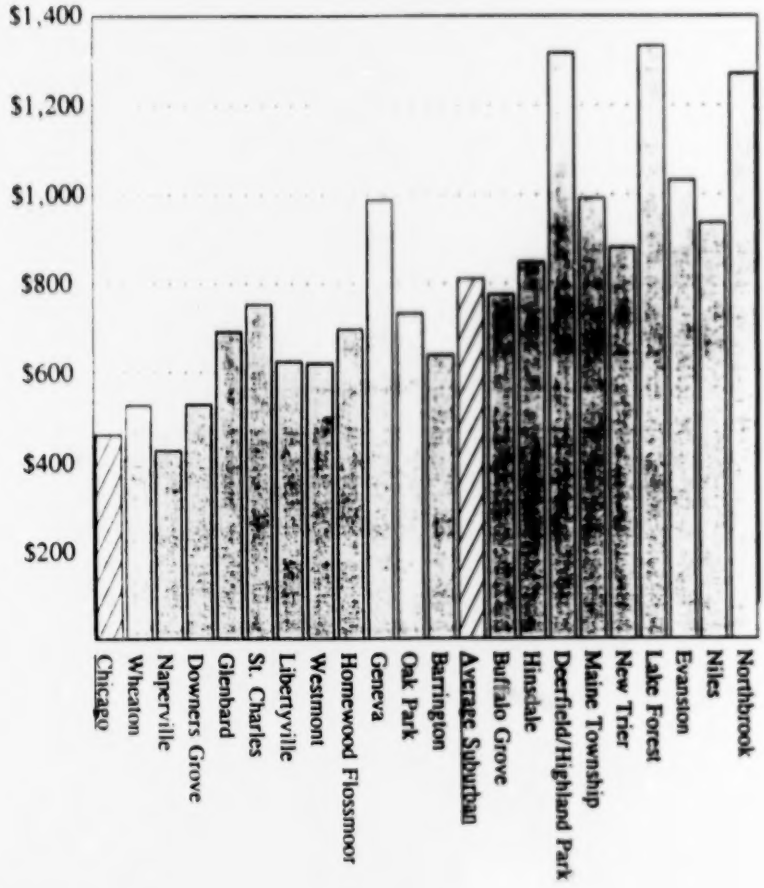
In FY 1991, combined suburban districts composed of high school and elementary districts paid teachers an average of $43,221 compared to unit suburban districts that average $40,518. High school suburban districts paid their teachers an average of $52,384 per year. This accounted for most of the $2,700 difference between the different types of suburban districts.

D. DIFFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Total administrative costs at the school and central administrative levels were lower in Chicago than in the highest achieving suburban school districts. As Table 8 below shows, average suburban administrative costs were $350 more per student than Chicago's cost. Chicago allocated less of its total budget towards administration than the average of the suburban districts surveyed. Chicago spent less on administration per student than 95% of the suburban districts surveyed. Several of the combined districts spent more than $1,200 per student on administrative costs, while Chicago spent half that figure ($459).

Table 8

Administrative Spending by District



Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois School Districts. *Annual Financial Report*
June 30, 1991

Administrative costs include both central and local administrative expenditures. Because district annual financial reports do not disaggregate administrative costs by central office and local schools, this analysis did not distinguish between local and central administration. Expenditures for the office of the principal may be classified as local costs. By removing the office of the principal from the administrative cost comparison, Chicago's per student administrative cost was $265 less than the suburban average.

Between FY 1989 and FY 1991, central administration and subdistricts in Chicago were reduced by 632 positions. Recent decentralization of Chicago's administration has reduced costs even below staffing levels in FY 91. Since 1991, another 506 administrative positions at the central office have been eliminated.[11] Preliminary projections predict that for FY 94, central administration will comprise an estimated 3% of all funds, an extraordinarily low amount when compared to suburban high-achieving districts.[12]

Employee Compensation

In FY 1991, the average administrator's salary in the highest achieving suburban districts was $66,334, compared to an average salary of $60,206 in Chicago. While attention often focuses on the salary of the superintendent in Chicago, administrative salaries and benefits in the suburban districts cost roughly $200 more per student than in Chicago. In fact, the student/administrator ratio was higher in Chicago with one administrator for every 368 students, while the suburban average was one administrator for every 224 students. Chicago appeared to attain economies of scale in administration that smaller suburban districts, usually separated into elementary or high schools, did not. Thus for every 1,000 students, Chicago had about three administrators, while these suburban districts had four.

Administrative Inefficiency in Combined School Districts

The average cost for an education in a unit district was less per student than in the combined districts. The similarities among all the districts surveyed indicated that level of achievement of high-achieving unit districts was comparable to the high-achieving combined districts, but the costs were lower in the unit districts. An overlap of administrative and support services did result in combined school districts having higher costs per student. Each high school and elementary district that comprised a combined school district had a superintendent, as well as its own administrative staff. Higher salaries in districts only serving high school students also contributed to the higher administrative costs.

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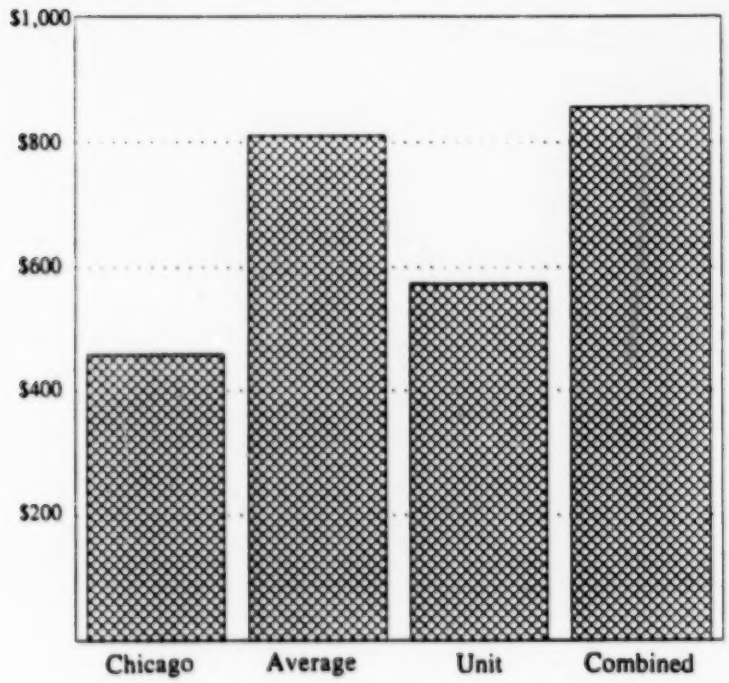
[11]Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance, "Staffing Trends," February, 1993.

[12]"Preliminary Projections for FY 1994", Chicago Board of Education, 1993.

Table 9

Administrative Expenditures per Student by District Type



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The most inefficient type of district structure in terms of administrative costs was the dual high school and elementary suburban district. The cost per student for administration was roughly $400 more in combined suburban districts than in Chicago. Compared to the unit suburban districts, dual suburban districts spent $280 more per student on administration.

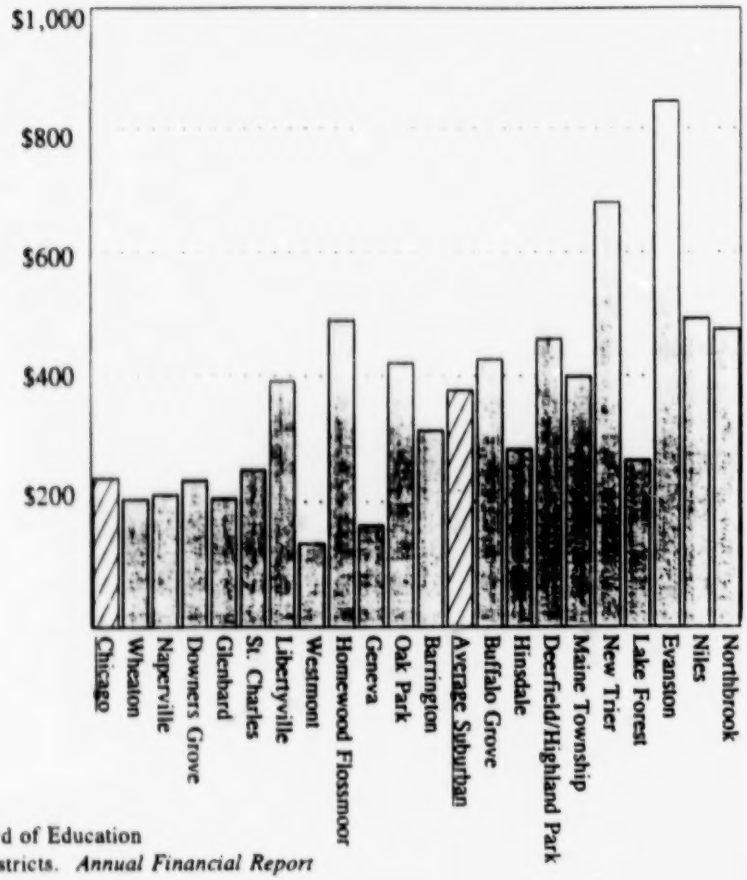
E. IMPACT OF REVENUE ON SUPPORT SERVICES

Chicago public school students received fewer support services than their suburban counterparts even though they appeared to have far greater need for them.

As shown in Tables 10 and 11, many of the suburban districts spent considerably more per student on support services than did Chicago.

Table 10

Support Service Spending by District



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June 30, 1991

Despite the fact that Chicago had 16,894 chronic truants, compared to a total of 677 chronic truants in the suburban districts surveyed, Chicago spent $10 less per student for attendance and social work services. In total, Chicago spent roughly $20 million while the highest achieving suburban districts spent approximately $13 million for a twentieth as many students, most of whom were more advantaged than the city pupils.

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The amount spent for guidance, health, and psychological services was $32 less per student in Chicago than what was spent on the average high-achieving school district student. Calculating the total amount of support services per low-income student makes apparent the differences in services in relation to student need. Although all students benefit from student support services, low-income students disproportionately require these services. Chicago had 272,846 more low-income students than the high-achieving districts. Chicago spent $324 per low-income student compared to $9,425 per low income student, in the highest achieving districts on student support.

Chicago had 17 times more low-income students than the highest achieving suburban school districts, but spent $140 less per student.

Table 11

Expenditures by Support Service Program

Expenditures for Student Support Service	Chicago Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Average Suburban Spending Per Student	Percent of Total	Spending Difference Per Student
Attendance & Social Work Services	$51	0.9%	$61	0.8%	($10)
Guidance Services	$123	2.3%	$143	1.9%	($20)
Health Services	$36	0.7%	$38	0.5%	($2)
Psychological Services	$26	0.5%	$36	0.5%	($10)
Speech Pathology and Audio	$0	0.0%	$37	0.5%	($37)
Other Support Services	$0	0.0%	$62	0.8%	($62)
Total Student Support	$237	4.4%	$377	5.0%	($140)
Total Expenditures	$5,417	100.0%	$7,577	100.0%	($2,160)

Illinois State Board of Education
Illinois School Districts. *Annual Financial Report*
June 30, 1991

F. OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

The operational expenditures in this analysis include activities concerned with maintaining the physical plant. The percentages of the total budget allocated for operations in Chicago and in the highest achieving suburban districts were comparable. However, the high-achieving districts were able to spend $517 more per student than Chicago on operational expenses. Chicago allocated $487 per student for salaries and benefits for operational services, which was $38 more per student than in the suburban districts.

Chicago spent $52 less on transportation per student than the average of the highest achieving school districts. In FY 91, maintenance of school buildings in Chicago received $197 per student less than in the highest achieving school districts.

G. DIVERGENT NEEDS

Chicago spent an enormous amount of money on security and meal programs. Significantly higher rates of crime and vandalism and poor nutrition of children required these expenditures. The high-achieving districts were not confronted by these needs to the same degree.

In fiscal year 1991, the Chicago Public Schools spent approximately $22 million in Operation and Maintenance of Plant Services on security. This expenditure represented special payments to the Chicago Police Department for officers assigned to school sites as well as other Chicago Public School security employees.

The Chicago Public Schools' cost for food services was $134 more than the average of high-achieving districts. Chicago spent $242 per student on food services, which was roughly 4% of its total budget, compared to the average suburban cost of only $108 per student that comprised 1% of their budget. Although breakfast and lunch programs were almost entirely funded through federal categorical grants, Chicago spent roughly $103 million on free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs. Chicago's breakfast and lunch programs comprised roughly 55% of the total nutrition programs in Illinois schools.[13]

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[13]Chicago Board of Education, *1991 Annual Financial Report*, 1991. Chicago Board of Education, 1990-91 School Budget, 1991.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. SELECTION OF DISTRICTS

Districts containing individual schools with the highest ACT and IGAP scores in the metropolitan area were chosen as the unit of analysis. The districts containing these schools were then joined with neighboring elementary districts and corresponding high school districts to complete the 14 combined suburban districts which were added to 6 suburban unit districts for analysis. The 87 selected school districts that contained these schools consisted of 6 existing unit districts and 81 elementary and high school districts that were joined together to create the 14 combined suburban districts. These districts are located in Lake, DuPage, Kane, and Cook Counties in Illinois. (See Appendix 2 for a District Map.) Each of these combined districts includes, then, the full range of student age groups and all of the educational and administrative resources that suburban communities utilize to educate their children. The school districts are generally proportionately distributed among the counties based on total number of districts and students. The suburban sample provides a wide range in levels of total per pupil spending. These districts provided a purposive sample, to compare high achieving school districts with Chicago, and were not intended to be representative of all suburban districts.

Combining High School and Elementary Districts

Illinois has three different types of districts: elementary, high school, and unit districts. Elementary districts have students from kindergarten through eighth grade, high school districts include grades nine through twelve, and unit districts include all grade levels from kindergarten through twelfth. The majority of the school districts in this analysis were high school and elementary districts rather than unit districts.

Comparing Chicago District 299, a unit district, to its neighbors is difficult because most Chicago suburban districts are either elementary or high school districts and therefore are subject to different tax rate constraints and funding formula weightings than unit districts. To overcome this problem and create a basis for comparison, the League utilized an aggregating mechanism developed by the Center for the Study of Education Finance at Illinois State University. Elementary and high school districts were linked together to create combined districts.[14] The study created combined school districts by joining all elementary districts to a corresponding high school district that shares overlapping boundaries with the districts. When elementary districts were located in more than one high school district, a digitizer, a computerized device used in cartography, was utilized to measure the percent of

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[14]William L. Hinrichs, Ramesh B. Chaudhari, G. Alan Hickrod, and Ben C. Hubbard. "The Effects of Consolidation of Elementary and Secondary Districts into Unit Districts in Illinois upon Equity Goals in that State," Center for the Study of Education Finance, Illinois State University, March 1983.

the elementary district in each of the high school districts in order to allocate district costs and resources.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) employed the combining mechanism developed by the Center for the Study of Education Finance to provide a current listing for high school and feeder elementary districts in Illinois. The listing calculated the percent of each elementary district located within high school districts in the State. This updated information from ISBE provided the basis for the creation of combined districts used for this analysis.

B. A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO FINANCIAL DATA

School finance information is usually reported and analyzed in terms utilized in calculations of state aid to individual districts. This approach does not, however, report the full range of financial resources districts use to educate their students. The League's statistical work presents an alternative perspective to the conventional reporting of school finance information that makes possible more comprehensive comparisons of total resources available to schools to educate their children.[15] Listed below are key elements of the League's analysis that differ from conventional approaches of study.

Inclusion of All Resources Spent on Education

This report utilized financial data from the *Annual Financial Report* for FY 1991 submitted by school districts to the Illinois State Board of Education. This was the most recent year for which all financial and report card data needed for this analysis were available. This analysis included several expenditure categories in addition to those used in the Illinois School Report Card. Included in this analysis are adult education, debt service payments, summer school, and community services that represent spending categories of school districts not generally included in Illinois State Board of Education financial analysis. Because state categorical funds supplement wealthy districts, omission of those expenditures from previous studies has understated the full range of educational services these districts can provide.

Debt service and interest payments are included as annual expenses of school districts. Debt service for the Chicago Public Schools includes bond payments by the Chicago School Finance Authority and Public Building Commission. Major capital expenditures are not a part of the analysis because they would distort the annual comparison. The Site and Construction Fund and payments for capital programs represented by expenditures in the object code of the Rent Fund are excluded from this study.

Individual districts have the option of utilizing either cash or accrual accounting methods. While this could lead to imprecision in data comparison for a given month, or for certain

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[15]Initial methodologies for comparing school districts were developed with the assistance of staff from Catalyst Magazine. See Linda Lenz, "Chicago's School Budget From Pupil's Point of View," *Catalyst*, April 1992, pp. 8-10.

expenditure categories, within the categories analyzed in this study over a year's time period there should be no material effect on the comparability of data.

Recognizing the Needs of All Children

The League used fall enrollment data to calculate each district's per student expenditures. Financial data are conventionally reported in terms of average daily attendance rates, while the School Report Card generally uses Fall enrollment data. By examining expenditures by Fall enrollment, the League analyzed spending in terms of the total number of students a district serves, rather than the attendance rates during the year. This type of analysis more accurately represents the costs districts incur for their programs because many types of spending are determined by programs selected and staff hired at the beginning of the year.

Properly Comparing Costs of Employee Pensions

Pension contributions, except for the Chicago pension employee contribution paid by the district, were not included in the analysis. The complexity of pension contributions, the differences in contribution requirements, and the various sources of funds made regular pensions very difficult to compare. However, the teacher pension contributions that replace individual employee payments or are supported by local property tax levies were calculated as an expense of the district. (These contributions are commonly referred to in Chicago as the pension pick-up.)

The Municipal Retirement Funds were not included in the financial comparison because Chicago's civil service pensions payments are supported by the City's pension funds and are not a part of the districts' annual financial reports. However, the Municipal Retirement Funds are utilized by the vast majority of school districts in Illinois to support non-teacher pensions.

The State of Illinois supports teacher pensions for all other districts except Chicago through a State fund. Chicago has its own Teacher Pension Fund, which receives partial payment from the State for the employer portion of the costs. In all other districts except Chicago, the State supports the entire employer contribution of teachers pension costs. Chicago taxpayers are the only ones in Illinois required to support a part of the employer's portion of the pension costs. To make the analysis more meaningful, State contributions to the Chicago Teachers Pension fund are not included, since the State payments to other districts are not recorded as a part of the annual financial reports, but are deposited directly in the Illinois Teacher Pension Fund.

Other districts may have similar expenditures in their Education Funds which we have not eliminated because the exact amount of these expenses was not identifiable from their financial reports. Less than 6% of the suburban districts surveyed reported pension

contributions as part of their education fund spending. The inclusion of these contributions may result in slightly higher expenditures per pupil in a small portion of the suburban districts in the sample.

Reflecting the Entire Learning Process

This analysis is designed to analyze as fully as possible the range of programs utilized to educate children. Conventional financial analysis often distinguishes between general education fund expenditures and other funds, thus implying that expenditures from these other funds have less impact on the educational process. This study aggregates goods and services purchased with General State Aid, local revenues, and various categorical revenues.

For this analysis, the League created categories for the type and function of expenditures based on the Illinois Program Accounting Manual. The analysis aggregated functional types of expenditures across different funds. Operations and maintenance of plant services were listed in the Education Fund and Operations and Maintenance Fund. All object types were represented by the categories defined by the Illinois State Board of Education and are included in the annual financial reports. Payments to special education cooperatives and other entities are contained in special education program expenditures in the instruction category.

The League expanded the ISBE definition of instructional expenditures to include programs that provide direct instructional assistance to teachers in their work with students. This analysis included improvement of instructional services, educational media services, and assessment and testing as instructional programs rather than as support services. The Improvement of Instructional Services category includes activities designed to help instructional staff in planning, developing, and evaluating the instructional process. Educational Media Services involves programs associated with media resource centers that involve teaching and learning activities. The assessment and testing budget category contains activities to measure student achievement.

Appendix 1

Listing of the Highest Achieving School Districts in the Metropolitan Area Combined and Unit Districts

1. **Barrington Unit District 220**

2. **Buffalo Grove Combined District**
   - Township High School District 214
   - Palatine School District 15
   - Wheeling CC School District 21
   - Prospect Heights School District 23
   - Arlington Heights School District 25
   - River Trails School District 26
   - Mount Prospect School District 57
   - Comm Cons School District 59

3. **Deerfield/Highland Park Combined District**
   - Township High School District 113
   - Bannockburn School District 106
   - Deerfield School District 109
   - Highland Park School District 107
   - Highland Park School District 108
   - Highwood Highland Park School District 111

4. **Downers Grove Combined District**
   - Community High School District 99
   - Downers Grove Elementary School District 58
   - Maercker School District 60
   - Darien School District 61
   - Cass School District 63
   - Center Cass School District 66
   - Woodridge School District 68
   - Puffer Hefty School District 69

5. **Evanston Combined District**
   - Evanston Township High School 202
   - Evanston C C School District 65

6. **Geneva Unit District 304**

7. **Glenbard Combined District**
   - Glenbard Township High School District 87
   - Marquardt School District 15
   - Queen Bee School District 16
   - Glen Ellyn School District 41
   - Lombard School District 44
   - Glen Ellyn CC School District 89
   - Community School District 93

8. **Hinsdale Combined District**
   - Hinsdale Township High School District 86
   - Butler School District 53
   - Maercker School District 60
   - Darien School District 61
   - Gower School District 62
   - Cass School District 63
   - Community School District 180
   - Hinsdale School District 181

9. **Homewood Flossmoor Combined District**
   - Homewood Flossmoor School District 233
   - Homewood School District 153
   - Flossmoor School District 161
   - Brookwood School District 167

10. **Lake Forest Combined District**
   - Lake Forest Community High School District 115
   - Lake Bluff School District 65
   - Lake Forest School District 67

11. **Libertyville Combined District**
   - Libertyville Community High School District 128
   - Oak Grove School District 68
   - Libertyville School District 70
   - Roundout School District 72
   - Hawthorn School District 73

12. **Maine Township Combined District**
   - Maine Township High School District 207
   - Des Plaines C C School District 62
   - East Maine School District 63
   - Park Ridge School District 64
   - Pennoyer School District 79
   - River Trails School District 26
   - Des Plaines School District 62

13. **Naperville Unit District 203**

14. **New Trier Combined District**
    - New Trier Township High School District 203
    - Sunset Ridge School District 29
    - Glenview School District 34
    - Glencoe School District 35
    - Winnetka School District 36
    - Avoca School District 37
    - Kenilworth School District 38
    - Wilmette School District 39

15. **Niles Combined District**
    - Niles Township Community High School 219
    - Glenview School District 34
    - Golf Elementary School District 67
    - Skokie School District 68
    - Skokie School District 69
    - East Prairie School District 73
    - Skokie School District 73.5
    - Morton Grove School District 70
    - Niles Elementary School District 71
    - Skokie Fairview School District 72
    - Lincolnwood School District 74

16. **Northbrook Combined District**
    - Northfield Township High School District 225
    - Northbrook School District 27
    - Northbrook School District 28
    - Northbrook Glenview School District 30
    - West Northfield School District 31
    - Glenview School District 34

17. **Oak Park Combined District**
    - Oak Park River Forest School District 202
    - Oak Park Elementary School District 97
    - River Forest School District 90

18. **St. Charles Unit District 303**

19. **Westmont Unit District 201**

20. **Wheaton Unit District (Community Unit 200)**

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